



April 2019

Welcome to the Rail User Express.

RUX is published around the middle of each month. Anyone may request an email copy, opt to be notified when RUX is posted on the Railfuture (Rf) website. It may be forwarded, or items reproduced in another newsletter (quoting sources). There is no charge for either service. Following GDPR, the [Railfuture Secretary](#) now maintains both lists. Please let him know if you no longer wish to receive the newsletter or link, or if you know of anyone who would like to be added. For further detail of any of the stories mentioned, please consult the relevant website, or ask [the editor](#) for the source material.

Every train operating company in England and Wales is now using a new performance metric called 'On Time'. For a train service to qualify, it must call at every station scheduled on its route and its final destination within 59 seconds of the time stated on the timetable, rather than call at every scheduled station, and arrive at its final destination within five minutes of the timetable, under the old Public Performance Measure (PPM). 'On Time' is a tough measure, and 59 seconds is not a lot of slack for services such as the Thameslink, but it will challenge operators and provide clarity to passengers.

Roger Smith

We continue with the usual roundup of news items from groups around the UK. Please keep your contributions coming: they are all gratefully received.

Levenmouth Rail Campaign

The latest STAG update on the Transport Scotland webpage shows the Progress Working Group meeting, with Stakeholder Engagement exercises ongoing, as well as Transport Modelling and Reporting. However, progress has been much slower than envisaged in the original timetable produced around 14 months ago. This extended delay is probably why Transport Minister Michael Matheson MSP has not yet found time to visit Levenmouth, as promised last September.

Rail Action Group East of Scotland

Last November, RAGES Chairman Tom Thorburn wrote to John Lamont MP regarding overcrowding on CrossCountry services, and asking when this would be addressed, given the cancellation of a new franchise pending the Rail Review. Mr Lamont forwarded the letter to Transport Secretary Chris Grayling. The reply from an Under-Secretary included the following: "Following cancellation of the franchise competition, the DfT will now work with CrossCountry to explore opportunities to address the crowding issues. This may be through additional rolling stock or changes to train service patterns."

In January, RAGES Vice-Chairman Barrie Forrest BEM and Secretary Allison Cosgrove met local council representatives and ScotRail's Special Projects Manager Gordon Macleod. The Group was encouraged by assurances regarding plans to reopen East Linton and Reston stations in Control Period 6 (2019-24). The commitment of the Scottish Government is unwavering, and NR is currently working on detailed designs and delivery timescale.

In a meeting with Scottish Transport, RAGES was told that East Linton would have 6-car length platforms served by ScotRail, and Reston 10-car length platforms with a northbound loop, and served by both ScotRail and a Cross-Border operator. NR has also confirmed that work on a second 10-car platform with step-free access at Dunbar will start in May, and should complete early in 2020. It will increase capacity on the East Coast Main Line, and improve operational flexibility.

Furness Line Action Group

FLAG is looking forward to the long-delayed major improvements to its services from 19 May. The new timetable will herald eleven through trains between Barrow and Manchester, with the new Spanish-built CAF diesel units being phased in from the start. It hopes that the increase in frequency, through-travel and reliability will win back the passengers lost when travel plans were blighted by months of infrastructure delay, problems with the May 2018 timetable, staff and rolling stock shortages, and RMT industrial action. There will also be reductions to day return tickets for commuters and residents, as well as cheaper advanced purchase fares to capture the leisure market. However, Northern has not introduced Carnets (books of tickets), as it is discussing with Rail North a proposal for Flexible Season tickets on Smartcards.

In addition to Northern's own multi-million-pound station improvement programme, NR and Northern have £1.2 million worth of upgrades in hand at Barrow-in-Furness, Sellafield, Whitehaven, Workington, Burneside, Staveley and Windermere, including better seating and waiting areas, revamped toilet facilities and new customer information screens. However, public transport is there to serve the whole urban and rural community and, in FLAG's view, the cash would be better spent addressing some of the serious issues at the other stations, particularly in regard to platform access: for example, steps on both the underpass at Ulverston and the footbridge at Arnside cause problems for older passengers and those with heavy suitcases. There are also platform heights to resolve, notably at Kents Bank.

The Guest Speaker at FLAG's AGM on 27 April will be Chris Jackson, Northern's Regional Director, West and Central. There is a train along the whole Cumbrian Coast, changing Barrow, arriving Carnforth at 1244.

Lancaster & Skipton Rail User Group

The May timetable details have still not been fully finalised, but the Bentham Line will regain its missing morning train, eliminating the 3-4 hour gap. Whether the connectional issues are sorted remains to be seen. Discussions on the December timetable are at an early stage. Following last May's chaos, the approach towards timetable planning appears to be safely-safely.

Northern has now received all its cascaded rolling stock from other operators and is in the process of gradually introducing electric trains on the Manchester-Preston route. This will free more diesel units, as will the arrival of its brand new trains in the summer.

The starting signal protecting the junction between the Furness Line and the Bentham Line at the western end of Platform 2 at Carnforth has been replaced, but remains under the control of Carnforth Station Junction Signal Box. Signalling control at the eastern end of the line, beyond Gargrave, has recently migrated from York IECC (Leeds Station) to York Control Centre (Leeds Station). This is the final stage of the phasing in of the York Control Centre for the Bentham Line (and for some of the Calder Valley routes).

Ribble Valley Rail

Rail travel over the past 12 months on the Clitheroe line has been unreliable, with frequent turn-backs at Blackburn. Strike action on Saturdays and ongoing engineering work have deterred passengers from using the service: all stations suffered a decline in passenger numbers ranging from Clitheroe down 4.6% to Langho down 14.7%. Now that electrification through Bolton is complete and the RMT strike is over, hopefully the travelling public will have more confidence in rail travel and numbers will recover.

Northern Weekly Salvo (Prof Paul Salvesson)

Carnforth station, the setting for the David Lean film 'Brief Encounter', now has a superb cafe and bar, a museum, children's play area, a small cinema and bookshop, mostly staffed by volunteers. A dozen members of Bolton Station Community Development Partnership, assisted by Northern, visited Carnforth, and were really impressed by what has been achieved. What was once a derelict shell is now a thriving tourist attraction. The role of the volunteers in running the museum and bookshop was impressive, but the highly commercial way in which the cafe and bar were run, with paid staff was also recognised.

A ceremony in Llandrindod Wells on 28 March formally marked completion of the [The Heart of Wales Line Trail](#), paralleling the railway from Llanelli to Craven Arms. The trail was made possible by the help of the previous franchisee, Arriva Trains Wales. Paul is proud to have helped in the early stages of the project, which will be of significant benefit to communities along the line.

Support The Oldham Rochdale Manchester lines (STORM)

Regarding an early departure from Rochdale, Northern responded as follows: "The 1634 has to come out of Rochdale ahead of the Leeds – Southport service (rather than at xx42 as normal) owing to a freight path which is following the train from Leeds over the Calder Valley. The train from Rochdale then has to get into Brewery Loop in time to be passed by the train from Leeds to allow both trains to pick up their normal slots forward from Victoria. With the turn round at Rochdale, this only leaves time to make one call out of the three stations, which is made at Mills Hill." A later departure time is possible on Saturdays, as the freight path does not exist then. Thus NR is responsible for this situation, not Northern. STORM will now contact NR to try and put this poor passenger situation right.

The introduction of five-car trains (or five plus loco) will impact on capacity at Manchester Airport, where "doubling up" of trains in the platform is the normal practice. The platforms at MIA are approximately 200m long, and the signalling splits them in half. Thus a 4-car train can come into the outer (B) half behind another 4-car in the inner (A) half. But a 5-car train in the A half spills over the boundary, so the B half cannot then be used at all, not even by a 2-car set. The platforms cannot be lengthened, and there is no siding in which to put an empty train. The May timetable perpetuates interworking of Middlesbrough and Newcastle services to provide 40min turnarounds. This eats up platform capacity so, to leave enough platform space for other services, both are worked by 3-car 185s. However, this arrangement will end when Middlesbrough gets loco-hauled sets, and Newcastle the bi-modes.

Northern has reached a major milestone in the rollout of Smartcards: all of its ticket offices can now offer season ticket customers a Smartcard instead of the traditional paper ticket. By the end of February, it had sold over 5,000, around 20% of ticket office season sales, and equating to over 100,000 journeys.

Northern's network connects people to five National Parks and two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The South Pennines form part of a ridge of hills between two National Parks: the Peak District and the Yorkshire Dales. It is home to a treasure trove of natural wonders including sweeping moorlands and wild peaty hilltops, as well as historic gritstone settlements, but is the only upland landscape in England not protected as a National Park or AONB. Pennine Prospects is the rural regeneration agency for the area. Recently Michael Gove, the Environment Secretary, announced a review led by writer and author Julian Glover to ensure designated landscapes are fit for the future. Northern hosted Julian and the Pennine Prospects team at Halifax Station, where they were able to share its plans for service developments in the area, as well as its network of community volunteers across the South Pennines, that enables Northern to build a unique bond with rural communities in areas like the Calder Valley.

At its inaugural conference on 11 February, Transport for the North launched its Strategic Transport Plan and Investment Programme, including Northern Powerhouse Rail. Its draft proposals for northern infrastructure for the next 30 years outline how up to £70bn of investment could generate an additional £100bn in economic growth for the North's economy, and create 850,000 extra jobs.

Skipton – East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership

SELRAP's 17th AGM on 12 March was very positive and well attended, including supporter Lord Greaves. The group has 525 individual members, and continues to have a wide range of support across different political parties. Chair Peter Bryson reminded those present that re-opening the Skipton to Colne Line was technically feasible. After the formal proceedings, SELRAP welcomed Simon Walton, Chairman of the Campaign for Borders Rail. Closure of the line due to the Beeching cuts led to the area becoming depressed and isolated, but its reopening from Edinburgh to Tweedbank in 2015 has been a roaring success, and is helping regeneration; to date 4 million passengers have used the line. The Campaign continues to extend the route to Hawick and Carlisle.

North Cheshire Rail Users Group

The transition from Arriva Trains Wales to Transport for Wales (TfW) was dogged by unscheduled maintenance, and the autumn leaf fall brought significant disruption on the North Cheshire and Wrexham-Bidston lines. The Group now awaits the introduction of new rolling stock to provide extra resilience to the TfW schedules, and provide the cascaded rolling stock needed for Halton Curve services in May. Concern has been expressed over the configuration of the new units to replace the existing 'inter-city' Class 158 and 175 units, particularly in respect to the 'suburban commuter' type layout: there may be implications for disabled users, cyclists and those with baggage; NCRUG is monitoring this development closely. To inform its Station Improvement Programme, and part of its franchise agreement, TfW is embarking on full station surveys; NCRUG feedback has been thorough.

TfW's Chester-Liverpool Lime Street service via Runcorn and Liverpool South Parkway will be hourly in each direction, but not to a clock-face timetable. However, NCRUG are disappointed with some aspects of it, and also the fare. The first departure from Chester is 0607 arriving LSP at 0644, too late for 80% of morning flights out of John Lennon Airport. And the single fare from Chester to either Liverpool station is £11.50, with no return fare available (£4 more than the Metrolink fare, but that journey involves a change, and takes over twice as long). With a bus fare from LSP to JLA at £2, a return journey to JLA from Chester sets you back £27, hardly an incentive to go by train. NCRUG is hoping to meet the TfW Head of Marketing and the new Wrexham office incumbent, Lee Robinson, to stress the benefits of an improved product package.

In winning the franchise Northern Rail planned to introduce a number of new, semi-fast 'Connect' services across the north of England. From 19 May these will be hourly throughout the day on weekdays and, with slightly altered timings, also on Saturdays, although not quite clock-face. There will be no Sunday service. One such proposed service is from Chester to West Yorkshire and through to Leeds, and from Chester to Manchester Victoria, although a few services will start/terminate at Ellesmere Port rather than Chester.

Rugby Rail Users Group

Last summer the Group hailed the introduction of frequent Virgin Train (VT) services from Rugby to the North West and Scotland, but was disappointed when West Midlands Trains' improvements planned for the December timetable were deferred. However, these do now appear in the draft May 2019 timetable. Notable improvements for Rugby passengers include:

- Direct London North Western Railway (LNW) services from Stafford to Crewe rather than via Stoke
- Linking LNW's London to Birmingham services with those to Liverpool, Crewe and the Chase line
- Improved LNW frequencies on Sundays.

Meanwhile, VT's direct Rugby - Blackpool services are proving a success; journeys between the two towns have risen by 67%. They are also popular with travellers from Rugby to/from Glasgow, with journey times ranging from about 3hr 45mins direct, to a little over 4 hrs with a comfortable change at Preston. A day out in Glasgow over 300 miles away is now a reasonable option for both business and leisure passengers – and none too expensive with Advance Tickets. Needless to say, the Group, which has lobbied long and hard for these services, will seek to continue this high quality express service whilst keeping up the pressure for even more improvements.

East Suffolk Transport Association

ESTA has responded to the third consultation on the proposed Sizewell C power station. It stresses the long-term benefits of rail investment, while making the point that EDF can reasonably be expected to pay only for enhancements needed as a direct result of the building of the power station. Thus, a passing loop in the Wickham Market area may suffice for construction trains, but complete redoubling between Melton and Saxmundham - or, ideally, Woodbridge and Saxmundham - with the additional work funded by other bodies such as NR, the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Train Operating Company would bring longer term benefits for passengers. ESTA also supports proposals to increase the line speed for freight trains over level crossings, proposals for remodelling Saxmundham Junction, and for a park-and-ride with a bus facility on the A12 just north of Darsham station, but questions the alleged need to strengthen Norwich Road and Bramford Road bridges in Ipswich.

At least five of the fleet of new Class 755 Stadler bimodal trains are on test in the ESTA region. They have been seen at Ipswich, Diss and on lines in Norfolk - but not yet on the East Suffolk Line. The plan is to have the new trains running to the current timetable on all local services by December. The new timetable (including four Lowestoft - London through trains) is due to be introduced in two stages, in May 2020 and December 2020. Greater Anglia has promised a "rolling consultation" prior to its introduction.

Windsor Lines Passengers Association

Some welcome improvements will come into force in May. The Ascot to Guildford service will run in two parts: Ascot to Aldershot and Guildford to Farnham. There will be three through services from Waterloo to Farnham in the evening, one more than now, but no change to the morning through services. There will be two new morning services from Reading to Waterloo, a new Windsor to Waterloo service via Hounslow and two fast Hounslow to Waterloo services. In the evening there will be a 15 min service to Reading from 1605 to 1950, and the 1650 and 1750 will call at Whitton. There are some changes to which trains call at Longcross, and one or two minor modifications to existing services. The Ascot line changes will also apply on Saturdays. Otherwise there are no changes to the weekend service.

Although few will appear on the Windsor lines, all 127 Class 450 units are being refurbished, with new carpets, re-foamed seats, and charging points, and additional standard-class seats. There will be eight First-class seats at either end of the two driving vehicles, a reduction from 24 to 16 seats in each four-coach unit. 28 of the units are 450/5s that, a few years ago, were created to be high capacity units. They will return to be the same as the others, with a common 2+3 seat arrangement. Thus the 450/0s gain 22 standard-class seats and the 450/5s gain 41 seats. The programme should complete by May. The trains will be repainted in SWR colours at a later date.

West Sussex Rail Users Association

The main tasks of the Brighton Mainline Improvement Project, which included large scale work in Balcombe and Clayton tunnels and on the Ouse Valley Viaduct, were completed successfully and on time from 16-24 February. The remaining work will continue over selected weekends up to May 2019. There are no changes to Southern services in the May timetable, but on Thameslink, the current hourly service from Brighton to Cambridge will become half-hourly, and has a good connection from Arun Valley services at Three Bridges.

RAILFUTURE

Railfuture welcomes new members, both individual and groups: the more we are, the more effective our campaigns. Join Railfuture [here](#). From the "Membership Types" menu top right, select either the appropriate category of individual or, to affiliate, select "RUG or similar". Read the latest from Railfuture and its Campaigns by clicking on [News and views](#), [Press releases](#), [Railfuture in the news](#), and [Railfuture consultation responses](#).

In case you missed the change last month, please note that Rf's Company Registered Office and thus the registered address changed on 4 March; however, it should be used for legal correspondence only. For details, see the revised imprint at the bottom of this newsletter.

Rf has a proud history of campaigning for rail re-openings, but targets those with a cast-iron business case. It wants to see speedy action on 12 schemes, including Leuchars-St Andrews, Thornton-Levenmouth, Skipton-Colne, Kirkby-Skelmersdale, Cambridge-Haverhill, Oxford-Cowley, Heathrow southern and western access, Bristol-Portishead, and Bere Alston-Tavistock.

London & South East branch had its usual stall at the annual London Festival of Railway Modelling at Alexandra Palace on 23-24 March, generously supported by East Midlands branch Chair Ariadne Tampion on the Sunday. At least one new member was recruited and a huge amount of free Rf literature was taken.

There are still some remaining copies of Ray King's 2017 edition of Britain's Growing Railway. It costs £9.95 (post free to UK), and can be bought [online](#).

The National Railway Museum has accepted many historical Rf records covering several decades, and has been cataloguing these items to make them available to the public via its website.

PASSENGER GROUP: TOC REPORTS

WEST MIDLANDS TRAINS

WMT has accepted Rf's tweaks to enhance evening and weekend services, and to provide reasonable time at places such as Shrewsbury and Worcester for passengers to cross platforms for onward connections. However the challenge of arranging connectivity between services operated by different TOCs has highlighted the constraint in their franchises not to speak to one another. This works against the interest of passengers, so the Williams Review should examine its removal.

The West Midlands Rail Executive (WMRE) has published its 30-year Rail Investment Strategy. It aims to develop a standard set of services frequencies across the region, with 6 tph with a turn-up-and-go 10min interval within the West Midlands urban area; 4 tph at 15min intervals for principal stations serving major towns or those with park and ride, and 2tph for local stations.

In conjunction with Midlands Connect, WMRE has also published the designs by architects Grimshaw for remodelling Moor Street station both to provide the Midlands Rail Hub and to link Curzon Street HS2 station through Moor Street to New Street station, ie the Birmingham "One Station" concept lobbied for many years by Rf West Midlands Branch. Passenger numbers at Moor Street are expected to grow from 7 million to 12 million/year by 2043.

Bletchley depot is being reactivated to house the Class 230s, which are yet to enter service on the Marston Vale line between Bletchley and Bedford. A new depot at Duddeston will house the 45 new 110mph 5-car Aventras to enter service in spring 2021, as well as the 36 90mph 3-car Class 730s to be used on the Cross-City line. The Aventras will be split into two sub-fleets: 16 for Trent Valley and Liverpool services, and 29 for the Birmingham - Northampton - Euston route.

SOUTHEASTERN

In December the DfT had confirmed an extension to the current Southeastern direct award, from 1 April to 22 June. On 10 April the Transport Secretary announced yet another delay with a negotiated extension to 10 November this year, and a possible extension to that until April next year! Meanwhile on the same day, the new East Midlands franchise was awarded to Abellio, displacing Stagecoach on 18 August 2019.

EUROPEAN PASSENGER GROUP

Dennis Fancett represented Rf at the European Passengers' Federation (EPF) AGM in March.

Passenger Rights: each EPF member would ask their respective National Enforcement Body to urge the appropriate EU Minister to accept the legislation as drafted, and not allow European Rail Operators to dumb it down.

EPF Eurostar Meeting: Mary Walsh, Director of Corporate Communications at Eurostar, said she would need to get back on virtually every issue. She was unaware that customers from London to the South of France could not select "via Lille" as a journey option preference, often to be force-routed via Paris with a poor connection between Paris termini, though she readily accepted Lille was the better option. Rf EPG should therefore continue its own dialogue with Eurostar, and not see the EPF liaison as a replacement. EPG's dialogue with Eurostar must include issues relating to through journeys from the UK to France and elsewhere in Europe that it had sought to progress at the EPF meeting.

Victoria Station: Darren Williams, NR Station Manager for Victoria, reported that NR was putting customers first by removing shops and kiosks which impede customer flow and the line of sight to platform gates, and commercial advertising space that Darren thinks should be used to communicate information to passengers in times of disruption. Rf hopes this thinking is rolled out to other major stations.

This year's [EPF Annual Conference](#) is in Stockholm on 7-8 June. The themes are possibilities and risks of a liberalized public transport market from the passenger's perspective (day 1), and the future generation's demand for both urban and long-distance public transport (day 2). Rf members qualify for discounted conference rates. The conference promises to be an interesting and thought-provoking event, as well as offering the chance to meet public transport campaigners from elsewhere in Europe. You can also sign up to receive [EPF's Newsletter](#).

RAILFUTURE YORKSHIRE

Founded by four Calder Valley RUGs and Rf Yorkshire and Rf North West, and Chaired by Andrew Jones MP (Harrogate & Knaresborough), the Northern Electrification Task Force is frustrated by lack of progress to implement its Northern Sparks report (March 2015). The Electric Railway Charter calls for a rolling programme of electrification, and the Task Force shortlisted 12 routes for an initial 5-year plan. Ranked on economic, business and environment criteria, top scheme was the full Calder Valley Line (Leeds to Manchester & Preston via both Bradford and Brighouse).

The Trans-Pennine Route Upgrade proposal that leaves the most steeply graded Huddersfield-Stalybridge section unwired seems perverse and short sighted. Full electrification is ideal for strategic routes like the Calder Valley, curving through the hills with frequent stops. All-electric trains with low mass, high pulling force and high acceleration will cut journey times. Electrics recover energy through regenerative braking. And electric freight trains would cause less disruption to the passenger service. Operational savings pay back the capital cost of electrification.

The Charter rejects “re-dieselisation”. Diesel bi-modes are bad for the environment and bad for business. Trains with both diesel engines (plus fuel tanks) and electric collection equipment are overweight and wasteful: underpowered on diesel, inefficient on electric; more complex, so costlier to buy and maintain, and with reliability unproven.

The Electrification Cost Challenge report by the Rail Industry Association shows that electrification costs could be cut by more than 50%. A [briefing](#) by Rf Chair Chris Page explains how the alternatives stack up.

The Askern Branch is primarily a freight line, but the Bradford to Kings Cross passenger service uses it, and it is also a diversionary route for the East Coast Main Line (ECML) and Doncaster - Leeds. The town of Askern is on the A19 Trunk Road, a road notorious for its congestion with housing built right up to the highway boundary, making it impossible to widen. It has a population of 11500 with another 5000+ in the surrounding villages, and recently had another 1000 houses constructed with more planned. A recent survey revealed many people travelling into West and South Yorkshire to work. Re-instating Askern station, and providing a service between Doncaster and Leeds via Askern and Pontefract would not only provide a useful commuter service, but also massively reduce pollution by taking thousands of cars off the road. The land needed for the station platforms and car parks has already been secured, and the cost of £1.1 million provided by Railway Engineers “Megatech”. So let’s get this proposal on track!

RAILFUTURE WESSEX

Rf Wessex continues to campaign for a railway station at [Welborne](#), between Fareham and Botley, at the site earmarked for 6,000 new homes. Initially, a single platform station could be built economically on the single-track line. It would be served by the existing hourly off-peak and half-hourly peak Portsmouth Harbour to Waterloo service via Eastleigh and Fareham.

ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIPS

ACoRP and The Prince’s Trust are embarking on a new partnership to help CRPs and groups engage more with young people, and collaborate with local Prince’s Trust programmes. It believes that community rail has a great deal to offer in enabling young people to access opportunities they might otherwise think out of reach, through sustainable, safe, inclusive transport, and through promoting skills and career pathways related to rail. Community rail officers and volunteers can contact their ACoRP operations team for ideas and advice on building youth involvement into projects and plans, and a link to a local Prince’s Trust rep.

London North-Western Railway (LNWR) is seeking more people to join its team of volunteers on the Abbey Line between St. Albans Abbey and Watford Junction. Station adopters are currently helping to maintain buildings, and undertake work such as the installation of CCTV cameras, or making stations more attractive.

East Hampshire CRP advises that, from May, South Western Railway will add over 300 services/week to its timetable across the network. Many of these service enhancements are based on consultations that were undertaken with stakeholders.

As in previous years Marwell Zoo is funding a rail bus link from Southampton and Eastleigh, with publicity by Three Rivers CRP. The aim of the service is to encourage visitors to the Zoo to come by train and bus, rather than by car. It commenced on 6 April, and runs through to 1 September.

...and now the rest of the news...

DfT has [listed](#) the 73 stations that will benefit from the latest stage of its Access for All programme. The list includes 27 stations held over from CP5, but is in addition to 24 ongoing projects. Each station will, subject to a feasible design, receive an accessible route in and out, as well as to and between every platform. All of the work is due to be completed by the end of March 2024. £20 million of the funding will be set aside to re-launch the Mid-Tier Access for All programme focused on stations where accessibility improvements can be delivered with between £250,000 and £1 million of government support. The DfT will be seeking nominations for this funding in due course.

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR), the rail regulator, recognises the importance of putting passengers and other users at the heart of the rail network, and its operation and development. The fundamental role of regulation is to look after the interests of users, now and in the future. Part of that is making sure that all voices and perspectives are properly considered in plans for the future development of the railway.

However, when things do not work as they should, its role is also to investigate what went wrong, and take appropriate action. Accordingly, ORR has fined Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) a record £5m over its chaotic introduction of the May 2018 timetable. ORR Deputy Director, Consumers, said: "The exceptional circumstances that followed the introduction of the timetable meant that providing perfect advance information for passengers was, from the outset, an impossible task, and GTR's overriding focus was on providing as much capacity as it could to meet customer demand. However, persistent and prolonged failures in information provision meant that passengers couldn't benefit from the operational improvement it was trying to make." A separate ORR investigation found that, whilst many Northern passengers were given "inadequate information" in the two weeks immediately following the timetable introduction, the firm "subsequently took reasonable steps" to rectify this, so no further action is being taken in relation to this issue.

Crossrail, aka The Elizabeth Line, should have opened last December, but will not now open fully until 2020 at the earliest. Three emergency cash injections have covered cost rises from £14.8bn to £17.6bn. Sponsored jointly by the DfT and Transport for London (TfL), the project is run by an "arms-length" body, Crossrail Ltd. A scathing report by the Commons' Public Accounts Committee found "an unacceptably laissez-faire attitude to project costs from the overlapping organisations: all three bodies were unwilling to pinpoint responsibility to a single individual or entity". A DfT spokesperson responded: "The Department consistently challenged the leadership of Crossrail Ltd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of TfL, on the delivery of this project. As soon as the company admitted delay, the Department and TfL acted swiftly to identify lessons, change the leadership of the Crossrail Ltd board, and strengthen governance and oversight."

Railway Gazette reports that LNER has finally received ORR approval for its Class 800/1 9-car and Class 800/2 5-car electro-diesel 'Azuma' trains to enter passenger service in 5, 9 or 10-car formations on the Leeds branch of the ECML, subject to the completion of final testing. However, work continues to address potential EMC interference with signalling equipment between York and Edinburgh.

On 25 March, Govia introduced the first two of its new, air-conditioned, six-carriage, Class 717 trains on Great Northern Metro services between Moorgate and Stevenage, Hertford North and Welwyn Garden City. The full fleet of 25 trains should be in service later this year.

According to Mayor James Palmer, the feasibility study for a Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro (CAM) makes "a compelling case". If the capital cost of £4bn can be found, work could start as soon as 2021. The CAM would cover a total of 88mils, with 7.5mils below the city, and branches to Waterbeach, Alconbury and St. Neots to the north and west, and Trumpington, Mildenhall and Haverhill to the south and east. It would operate with zero-emission "trackless metro" electric vehicles, at a maximum speed of 55mph. *[A St Neots branch would duplicate the Northern options for East West Rail – Ed.]*

...and finally

ACoRP and CAMRA are promoting the use of community rail lines to visit real ale pubs and breweries, with examples on Scenic Rail Britain of great pubs you can access by rail, links from CAMRA's public transport website to individual lines, and information on how CAMRA members can work with community rail. However, it needs more examples of where CRPs or station groups have worked with CAMRA or local pubs and breweries to create rail ale trails, or to feature specific pubs along community rail lines. Send any links, PDFs of leaflets or information to Anders Hanson at anders@acorp.uk.com

CONSULTATIONS

- ORR: [Regulating Network Rail's land disposals](#): closes 22 April.
- Edinburgh City Council: [The Future of Waverley station](#): closes 26 April.
- DfT: Williams Rail Review: [Objectives and Assessment Criteria](#), closes 30 April.
- DfT: [Extending PAYG](#), closes 1 May.
- DfT: [Light rail – call for evidence on how to better use and implement light rail and other rapid transit solutions in cities and towns](#), closes 19 May.
- Bristol City Council: [Local Plan Review](#), closes Friday 24 May.
- DfT: Williams Rail Review: [Call for Evidence](#), closes 31 May.
- Infrastructure & Projects Authority: [Infrastructure Finance Review](#): closes 5 June.
- ORR: [Market Review into rail compensation claims companies](#): **NO** published closing date!

Please advise [Roger Blake](#) of any other consultation, eg that of a local transport authority.

EVENTS

Do please keep your events coming, both to me and to [Roger Blake \(Railfuture\)](#), who maintains a [List of Events](#) and a [List of Key Dates](#) for consultations, franchise changes, CP6 planning, service alterations for major rail projects etc. As a Calendar of Events embedded in a document may be discarded, and that is a problem if the venue changes from month to month, a stand-alone copy in Word format would be very helpful.

Blob colour indicates the various types of event:

- Rf events (RUGs are cordially invited).
- National & regional rail events.
- Local Group events.

April

- Tuesday 16. Tarka Rail Association, Eggesford Crossing Café, **Chulmleigh**, Devon, EX18 7JZ, 1900. (AGM 23 May, Umberleigh.)
- Thursday 18. Magor & Undy Walkway Station, The Golden Lion, **Magor**, Monmouthshire, NP26 3HY, 1930. (also 16 May, 20 June.)
- Tuesday 23. Rf Thames Valley AGM, Oxford Town Hall, St Aldate's, **Oxford** OX1 1BX, 1900.
- Thursday 25. Levenmouth Rail Campaign, Fife College, Levenmouth Campus, **Buckhaven**, Fife, KY8 1EA, 1830 (also the final Thursday of each month).
- Thursday 25. Barking-Gospel Oak Rail User Group AGM, Town Hall, 1 Town Square, **Barking**, IG11 7LU, 1800. (celebrating 4-car electric trains!)
- Saturday 27. Rf West Midlands AGM, Priory Rooms, Bull Street, **Birmingham** B4 6AF (near Snow Hill), 1030.
- Saturday 27. Rf London and South East AGM, Wesley's Chapel, 49 City Road, **London** EC1Y 1AU, 1100.
- Saturday 27. Furness Line Action Group AGM, Furness & Midland Hall, **Carnforth** Station, Lancashire, 1330.
- Saturday 27. English Regional Transport Association Transport and Environment Conference, Campanile Hotel, 40 Penn Road, **Fenny Stratford**, Milton Keynes, MK2 2AU, 1100 (fee required).
- Monday 29. Campaign for Better Transport West and North Yorkshire Rail Group. Meeting at "Veritas" 43-47 Great George Street, **Leeds** LS1 3BB, 1930. (also 21 May, 3 June, 15 July at different Leeds venues.)
- Tuesday 30. Bolton Station Community Development Partnership, **Bolton** station BL2 1BE.

May

- Thursday 2. Rf London & South East, Sussex & Coastway Division, Lewes Town Hall, **Lewes**, East Sussex, BN7 2QS, 1800. (also 6 June, 18 July in different venues.)
- Saturday 4. Rf Scotland AGM, Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Street, **Edinburgh** EH1 2JL, 1400.
- Saturday 4. English Regional Transport Association, The Ivy Wall, 18-19 New Road, **Spalding**, Lincolnshire, PE11 1DQ, 1400.
- Wednesday 7. Ribble Valley Rail, New Inn, 20 Parson Lane, **Clitheroe**, Lancashire, BB7 2JN, 1430 (also 4 June, 2 July).
- Wednesday 7. Rugby Rail Users Group, Claremont Centre, 43 Clifton Rd, **Rugby**, CV21 3QE, 1915.
- Tuesday 7. Felixstowe Travel Watch AGM, Salvation Army Church, Cobbold Road, **Felixstowe**, Suffolk, 1930.
- Wednesday 8. Rf London & South East, Eastern Division, St. John's Church, Stratford Broadway, **London** E15 1NG, 1830. (and second Wednesday of alternate months.)
- Saturday 11. Rf London & South East, Herts & Beds Division, St. Paul's Church, Blandford Road, **St. Albans**, Hertfordshire, AL1 4JP, 1045.
- Saturday 11. Rf East Midlands open meeting, First Class lounge **East Midlands Parkway station**. Time tbc.
- Saturday 11. Friends of March station model rail event, **March station**, Cambridgeshire, 1000-1500.

- Saturday 11. Cumbrian coast Rail Users Group, Methodist Church Hall, Gosforth Road, **Seascale**, Cumbria, CA20 1PU, 1305 (and second Saturday of every month).
- Monday 13. Skipton - East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership, Herriots Hotel, **Skipton**, North Yorkshire, BD23 1RT, 1900.
- Monday 13. Bexhill Rail Action Group, Conquest House, **Collington**, East Sussex, TN39 3LW, 1900 (and second Monday of every month).
- Tuesday 14. Chesham & District Transport User Group, Town Hall, **Chesham**, Buckinghamshire, HP5 1EP, 1930 (also 18 June, 6 August, 17 September, 22 October, 10 December).
- Wednesday 15. Community Rail in the city 2019. ACoRP/CRP events at major stations around the country.
- Thursday 16. Magor & Undy Walkway Station, The Golden Lion, **Magor**, Monmouthshire, NP26 3HY, 1930. (also 20 June.)
- Thursday 16. Edenbridge & District Rail Travellers' Association AGM, WI Hall, Station Road, **Edenbridge**, Kent, TN8 5LX, 1900.
- Saturday 18. Rf National Annual General Meeting, Bute Suite, Sophia Gardens, **Cardiff**, CF11 9SW, 1100.
- Saturday 18. Friends of the West Highland Lines AGM, Commodore Hotel, West Clyde Street, **Helensburgh**, G84 8ES, 1130.
- Saturday 18. East Suffolk Travellers Association AGM, Gannon Rooms, Station Approach, **Saxmundham**, Suffolk, 1400 (also 5 October, Lowestoft Station).
- Saturday 18. Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association, Wharf Station, Talyllyn Railway, **Tywyn**, 1145. (also 8 June, 2 July, 6 August, 7 September, 5 October, 12 November, 7 December - various locations and times).
- Saturday 18. Friends of Settle-Carlisle Line AGM, Victoria Hall, Kirkgate, **Settle**, North Yorkshire, BD24 9DZ, 1200.
- Tuesday 21. Campaign for Better Transport, St. George's Conference Centre, **Leeds** LS1 3DL, 1930. (also 3 June, 15 July at different Leeds venue.)
- Wednesday 22. Friends of the Barton Line, The No.1 Inn, **Cleethorpes station**, 1900. (AGM 17 July, Barton.)
- Thursday 23. Tarka Rail Association AGM, Village Hall, **Umburleigh**, Devon, EX37 9AB, 1915.
- Saturday 25. Rf London & South East, Kent Division, venue tbc, 1400.
- Thursday 30. Levenmouth Rail Campaign, Fife College, Levenmouth Campus, **Buckhaven**, Fife, KY8 1EA, 1830 (also the final Thursday of each month).

Further Ahead

- 6 June. Rf London & South East, Sussex & Coastway Division, Christ Church Hall, Silchester Road, **St. Leonards-on-Sea**, East Sussex, TN38 0JB, 1800.
- 8 June. Rf North West, Merebrook pub, Greenfields Avenue, Bromborough, **Birkenhead**, CH62 6DD, 1300.
- 14-16 June. Rf East Midlands stall (provisional) at Great Central Railway's annual Model Event: volunteers welcome!
- 15 June. Rf East Anglia open meeting, St Mary Stoke Church Hall, **Ipswich**, Suffolk, 1400.
- 15 June. Rf Thames Valley stall at Oxford-Didcot 175, Grandpont recreation ground and pavilion, **Oxford**, OX1 4NA, 1200-1800.
- 22 June. Rf annual national Summer Conference, Dolphin Centre, Central Hall, Horsemarket, **Darlington**, DL1 5RP.
- 6 July. Rf London & South East stall at Uckfield Festival Big Day for Uckfield-Lewes campaign, Luxford Field, **Uckfield**, East Sussex, TN22 1AL, 1000-1600.
- 10 July. Rf London & South East, Eastern Division, St. John's Church, Stratford Broadway, **London** E15 1NG, 1830. (and every second Wednesday of alternate months.)
- 18 July. Rf London & South East, Sussex & Coastway Division, Perrymount Methodist Hall, Pinewood Gate, 28 Perrymount Road, **Haywards Heath**, West Sussex, RH16 3DN, 1800.
- 21 September. Rf annual national Autumn Conference, St. Michael's Church Centre, The Green, Stoke Gifford, (by Bristol Parkway station), **Bristol** BS34 8PD.
- 28 September. Rf East Anglia open meeting, **Norwich**, 1400.
- 26 October. Rf annual Branches and Groups Day, **Birmingham**, venue and timing TBN.
- 5 November. Rf Thames Valley joint event with Chipping Norton Railway Club with speaker from SLC-Rail, Town Hall, **Chipping Norton**, Oxfordshire, OX7 5NA, 1930.

Disclaimer: unless otherwise indicated, views expressed in Rail User Express are those of the contributing organization, and not necessarily shared by Railfuture.

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